

The Melissa Institute – Youth Conference on Bullying

STUDENT LEADERS - HANDOUT

What is Bullying?

1. **Bullying is not fair.**
Bullying involves a power imbalance – bullies are more powerful than their victims because of an advantage of age, size, ability, social status, peer support, etc. Bullies may also have power if they harass or provoke other students about a sensitive concern (e.g., being short, overweight, or about race, family, or sexuality).
2. **Bullies harass on purpose -- their behaviors are not accidental.**
3. **Bullying is not fun for the victims** who experience distress and may feel: angry, anxious, fearful, sad, embarrassed, and ashamed.
Victims often feel unsafe at school and try to avoid going to school.
4. **Bullying happens over and over again.**

What are the Types of Bullying?

Direct (Face-to-Face)

- Verbal (teasing, insults, put-downs, harassment*)
- Physical (shoves, pushes, hitting, assault*)
- Psychological (making a mean face, rolling your eyes, "dirty looks", uttering threats*, extortion*)

*These actions are against the law.

Indirect (Behind Someone's Back)

- Gossip (lowering people's opinions about the victim)
- Leaving out, Exclusion, Shunning
- Social aggression (Telling people not to be friends with a victim)

Who is Involved in Bullying?

Our observational research shows that:

- Peers are present in 85% of bullying episodes on school playgrounds.
- Bullying is common on school playgrounds. Students are involved in bullying about once every 7 minutes.
- Many different types of students engage in bullying, and many different types of students become victims.
- Bullying is very stressful for victims, onlookers, and eventually even for bullies.
- Bullying is kept hidden from adults and teachers.
- Students are VERY effective in stopping bullying when they intervene.

How are Students Involved in Bullying?

Students play many roles in a bullying situation:

- Bully or Bullies – often more than one student.
- Victim – usually only one student
- Bystanders – students who are close enough to see and hear the bullying behavior.
- Intervenors – students who do something to "Put the Brakes on Bullying"

How Can Students Help to Stop Bullying?

There are many ways in which students can help to stop bullying. Here are a few suggestions, but you probably have many more. Remember, when you intervene – do not bully the bully!

- Talk to the bully. Label the behavior as bullying and tell the bully to stop.
- Reach out to the victim in friendship. Provide comfort and support to the victim. (Be an "ally.")
- Report the bullying to school staff, or to your parents

Remember: Telling is reporting to get someone out of trouble. It's not the same as tattling or ratting, which is to get someone into trouble.

What Can You Do if Someone is Bullying You?

There are many ways in which students can respond when they are being bullied. Here are a few suggestions, but you probably have many more. Remember, do not bully the bully – fighting back almost always makes the situation worse!

- Ignore and walk away from the bully (this works best when bullying is mild).
- Look the bully in the eye, and confidently tell her/him to stop.
- Report the bullying to your teacher or to your parent.

You could also try:

- Using humor
- Finding "allies"

You should definitely:

- Tell someone you trust how you are feeling
- Don't keep your stress bottled up inside

Remember, you have the right to feel safe at school and in your community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT STUDENT LEADERS CAN DO IN THEIR SCHOOLS TO PUT THE BRAKES ON BULLYING

- Conduct an anonymous survey in your school to see how many students have bullied or been bullied in the past week.
- Do an environmental assessment: on a map of the school, ask students to show where bullying happens.
- Develop student-led presentations about bullying (this could be an assembly for several grades, classroom presentations to single grades, a skit could be prepared, etc.) You might want to do this for parents, too! They often need help understanding bullying and what can be done to stop it.
- Develop a Circle of Caring Program in which students volunteer to serve as "supporters" to students who are victims of bullying.
- Implement a Peacemakers/Conflict Resolution program.
- Spearhead a Peace Garden initiative, or other forms of school campus improvement.
- Developing student-led programs for lunch and other free time.
- Compiling an anthology of student writing and artwork related to bullying.
- Developing a Poster Committee, in which students create and post anti-bullying messages throughout the school.
- Developing plans for a school-wide Anti-Bullying Day.
- **YOU WILL HAVE LOTS OF GREAT IDEAS YOURSELVES.... START PLANNING!**

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